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I N T E R N A T I O N A L M A R X I S T G R O U P

8. Toynbee St.,
London E.1.
18/11/69

To: United Secretariat of Fourth International
Copy: Socialist Workers Party of USA

Dear Comrades,

The Political Committee of the International Marxist Group wishes to bring to your attention a serious matter. In the September/October issue of INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVIEW there is an article by Tom Kerry entitled "A Mao-Stalin Rift - Myth or Fact"; this article virtually starts with an attack on Tariq Ali, a member of the IEC of the Fourth International who is also on the National Committee of the IMG. The article is the main piece in the journal, it is written by the editor and is featured as the key article of the issue on the cover. It has, therefore, all the hallmarks of being an authoritative and definitive statement.

After the attack, Tom Kerry, as if to excuse his action, writes: "Tariq Ali wrote this article for the anthology before the announcement of his adherence to the International Marxist Group, the British section of the Fourth International...."

This statement is false: in the very book that Tom Kerry refers to Tariq Ali acknowledges the help given to him in producing the book by his colleagues of the IMG. The article in question was, in fact, discussed in draft form with a member of the United Secretariat (Strong).

It is not the intention of this letter to take up the politics of Tom Kerry's article. However, we want to pose a number of implications of an attack like this.

Firstly, we would point out that the charges by Tom Kerry against Tariq Ali are:

- (1) he contributed to the myth of a Mao-Stalin rift; and,
- (2) he regards Mao as one of the great revolutionaries of the 20th century.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVIEW has not always regarded this view as heresy. In the Fall, 1960 issue of the journal in (an) article by Murray Weiss, the then editor, it was written:

"....The Chinese Communist party did not act according to Stalinist theory and practice when it led the revolution to power....If, by following the Stalinist program the Chinese Communist party had overthrown imperialism, landlordism and capitalism, then indeed it would be necessary to reexamine the Trotskyist theory of Stalinism....The Chinese CP 'in defiance of Stalin's edicts' took power. According to the recently 'leaked' records of the July 1945 Potsdam Conference, published in the MINNEAPOLIS TRIBUNE August 22, 1960, Stalin, in his meeting with Churchill and Truman, referred to Chiang Kai-Shek as 'the

best of the lot.' Stalin said he 'saw no other possible leader and that, for example, he did not believe that the Chinese Communist leaders were as good or would be able to bring about the unification of China.'

"Clearly the Kremlin wanted the Chinese CP to continue its ruinous policy of working for a coalition with the Chiang regime. It was only when the situation became so rotten ripe for the overthrow of the inwardly decomposing and demoralised Nationalist government, and when the elemental movement of the agrarian revolution swept the Chinese CP leaders along with it that they could no longer abide by Stalin's directives. This is the simple fact (sic) about how and why the Chinese CP took power." (original emphasis throughout - the article was a polemic against one Walter Kendall, the deletions are references to him).

In the Spring 1962 issue of the journal, in a joint article by Murray Weiss and Bert Deck (managing editor), one could read:

"...the Chinese CP refused to give up its own armed forces, the Red Army, in the course of its coalition attempts with Chiang Kai-Shek. This key decision in turn enabled and even compelled the Chinese CP to stand at the head of a socialist revolution..." (and later in the article,):

"In a comparable manner (supporting John L. Lewis against the AFL bureaucracy) today, we support Mao without being Maoists. To be more concrete: on the main theoretical questions in dispute between the Russians and the Chinese, we think the Chinese are correct. In addition, the Chinese leaders base themselves on revolutionary social strata aroused by 650 million people entering the arena of history."

But there is more involved than this.

It is quite contrary to the traditions and practices of democratic centralism to have uncontrolled public discussion of differences in the form of leaders attacking each others' views. Such debate is, of course, permissible and can be valuable provided it is controlled, comradely and with full consultation. If it is left to the whim of individuals only chaos and confusion, which will disorient our membership and periphery, will result.

We must point out that there are on occasion views expressed by our comrades of the SWP in their publications with which we find ourselves in disagreement. Sometimes these views are reproduced in INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS and, therefore, distributed in Britain. Despite this fact we would never think of differentiating ourselves publicly from these views unless we had carefully discussed the matter and consulted all concerned. The same goes for other sections' views. We are sure that there are other sections which, from time to time, have similar feelings. What would happen if we all behaved in the manner of Tom Kerry?

Let us conclude by saying that we will consider the incident closed if our views are made known to the members of the SWP and the leaders of sections and groups of the International. We have no wish to change the warm and fraternal relations which exist between the IMG and the SWP, on the contrary it is because we wish to maintain these relations that we have to make our views known. Because the ISR is now on sale in Britain we are acquainting all members of the IMG with our views. At present we do not envisage the necessity of making a public statement.

Revolutionary greetings,

PETER PETERSON
(For Political Committee of the IMG)